

ALNAP Steering Committee Meeting
08/09/2014
US Mission, Geneva, Conference Room A
13 :00 – 16 :00

Meeting Minutes

ALNAP Steering Committee	Mia Beers (MB), USAID-OFDA Nan Buzard (NB), ICVA Kevin Savage (KS), World Vision International Anke Reiffenstuel (AR), MFA Germany Scott Green (SG), UN-OCHA (dial in) Frederic Penard (FP), Solidarites/Helene Juillard (HJ) (dial-in)
ALNAP Secretariat	Knox Clarke (PKC) John Mitchell (JM) Franziska Schwarz (FS) Alice Obrecht (AO)
Apologies for absence	Helen Wedgwood (HW), Tendik Tynystanov (TT), Bertrand Taithe (BT)

Action Points:

- The Secretariat will review the views from the Steering Committee on Membership and will bring suggestions for ways forward to the next SC Meeting.
- FS will send a doodle poll for the next SC Meeting, for either the w/c 12th January or w/c 19th January 2015.
- The Secretariat will produce a summary of the systematic review work for the next Steering Committee Meeting.

All Steering Committee members introduced themselves.

Agenda Item 1 Review of action points from last SC meeting

PKC provided some comments on the structured review process that ALNAP has used for the latest lessons paper, highlighting the difficulties of using a process of this nature for a broadly defined research question (such as what is best practice in floods). Notes on the method paper will follow.

PKC explained that there was a slight delay in delivery of the scoping paper for evaluation of protection; the draft version is undergoing peer review, which has delayed the process slightly.

Meeting Minutes : have been approved without further questions.

NB noted that all actions have been completed.

Agenda Item 2 - Secretariat News

JM – the Secretariat has recruited two Research Fellows - Alice Obrecht and Luz Saveendra - CV's attached as Meeting Papers. The Secretariat is currently recruiting a Communications Officer to replace Franziska Orphal.

Agenda Item 3 - Financial report

FS presented paper on the budget and funding report for period of 1 April 2014 – 30 June 2014.

AR asked about the Financial Year/ALNAP work plan years and how these are different for some donors. FS explained that the UK Financial Year runs from 1 April – 31 March, hence ALNAP's work plans/years also run for this period of time. Funds are thus linked to the work plan, rather than calendar years and donors can make contributions to the work plan when it fits with their accounting schedule within ALNAP's work plan years.

NB noted Meeting Paper 3 shows that funds requested were higher than the budget. FS explained that this is correct, and that extra funds are requested at the beginning of the year, with the expectation that not all of the requested funds will be forthcoming.

FS explained that 35% of funds have been received, and a total of around 75% of funds have been secured for the year.

Agenda Item 4 – Review of Membership and Structure

NB noted that the Steering Committee had requested this review at the last meeting and thanked the Secretariat for responding.

JM explained that there were currently 87 Members, with a current cap at 100. JM outlined the Membership categories of Full and Associate Members, and explained that all Full Members are asked to make a financial contribution, with the exception of the Research and Academic constituency. JM further explained that there are 8 constituency groups, and there were 5 criteria for Membership. JM also presented recent statistics from the website, including the number of unique visitors to the website and most popular downloads, which are comparatively high, where comparison is possible.

PKC explained that the HELP is growing steadily and needs an overhaul, due to the increase in number of documents, as well as the changing nature of resources, now including audio and video files also. PKC explained that the HELP was the only online repository of its size, focussing on evaluations. The growing number of resources on the HELP means the search function requirements become more sophisticated.

PKC further explained that the Secretariat has approached 5 potential developers of a new website, one of which provided a seemingly suitable overhaul proposal, which would ensure the most relevant resources are easily accessible. PKC explained that the database was too small for a google-style search engine, but smarter tagging of documents would be possible and will improve the search function.

PKC also explained that a new website for ALNAP will have financial implications, and would also require greater human resources input. It would also need further commitment from the Membership to upload resources (some of them are very good at doing this already). PKC also explained that there is thought of collaborating with the Leadership Academy (or/and others).

JM presented funding for the last FY (2013/2014) by constituency and by country.

JM summarised that ALNAP has consistently grown, has a good, steady and diverse funding base, and remains the only system-wide platform of its kind. The challenges going forward are:

- **Global Public Good vs. Membership organisation**, and the difficulty of providing services and products to the Membership, whilst also being a public good. There is an increasing demand on the ALNAP Secretariat to provide services to Members but the capacity to supply is not keeping pace with the demand.
- **Intimate organisations vs. Inclusiveness**; This issue is about the challenge of maintaining a Membership who knows and trusts one another, whilst at the same time having a system-wide, inclusive and increasingly diverse membership..
- **Ensuring members remain active.** Different members are interested in different element of the ALNAP workplan and there is a need to find ways for groups to come together around common topics of interest. There is also a need to assist members in submitting evaluation to the HELP.
- **How to deal with Federations?** The main question is about whether individual Members of a Federation can represent the whole in some way.

There may be a need to be clearer about what 'representation' means in practise.

- **Composition/size** : Are we happy with our current cap of 100 Members ? Should the Membership criteria be revised? Should new applicants be asked for a reference from an existing Member.
- **Where do we want to be in 10 years' time?**

NB remarked that this was very good background information and asked if there were any questions of clarification ? NB also noted that the purpose of the discussion was to take stock of issues and suggested that there may not be clear answers.

MB asked how the activeness of Members can be measured or analysed ?

JM explained that the level of engagement with different Members is seen in a number of ways: for example, as members of advisory groups, peer reviewers, SC participation, panels at Annual Meetings and so on. The level of engagement of the Full Members normally reflects their interests within the context of the current workplan. This kind of data is recorded in the ALNAP impact log. JM added that if a Member has been not as engaged for a long time, the Secretariat would follow-up with a phone call or email to see if interest was still there. Sometimes this led to a Full Member may changing their type of membership.

PKC added that engagement varies between the different work streams, but also over time; JM agreed with this and echoed that Members would engage on different work streams and would hence engage more or less at different times.

KS suggested that analysing engagement of Full Members could help with identifying non-active Members and could hence help with Membership size.

AR asked where the increased interest in Membership was coming from, and whether it was from a specific geographic region?

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JM explained that the biggest growth in Membership has come from the NGO and Academic/Research constituencies, and reasons for this vary ; there aren't as many UN/Red Cross organisations as there are NGOs and humanitarianism has become an increasingly popular subject in academia. JM added that there has also been a big increase in smaller NGOs.

FS explained that the applications are from a mixture of regions, but still mostly Western Europe and North America.

PKC added that reaching out to the Global South and being more inclusive in this regard, if successful, would mean significant growth.

AR also asked if ALNAP wants to move beyond the focus on natural disasters into political conflicts, which are becoming increasingly prominent ?

JM explained that lessons papers on natural disasters have a historical background and explained that years ago there was a high demand for practical lessons on types of

disasters, especially natural disasters. Lessons papers have remained one of ALNAPs most popular products (for example, the Earthquakes Paper after Haiti). JM noted that it was easier to write about natural disasters and that ALNAP has tried before to write lessons papers about political crisis in the past. But drawing genetic lessons from conflict is problematic. In the case of Syria for example ALNAP developed the Syria Portal making general, rather than synthesised, material available.

PKC added that work outside the lessons papers often looks beyond natural disasters, such as the leadership work or innovation.

FP wondered if the Membership currently represented the humanitarian community, and whether subscribers could have more of a say ? FP also asked when the cap at 100 was introduced and for what reasons.

JM explained that the cap was introduced as a response to rapid growth 5-6 years ago.

MB said that ALNAP is now much more known than it was years ago, and it could be useful to consider where ALNAP would like to go and where its strategic impact should lie. This could help with targeting specific organisations to join as Members.

AR suggested that there is not necessarily a conflict between ALNAP being a public good and a membership body; from a donor perspective, it would not matter as far as financing is concerned.

NB reminded everyone about ALNAP's impact model, and the key focus was on ALNAP Members, but stressed that ALNAP's impact goes far beyond. NB also wondered what the utilisation of the Membership is?

NB explained that the Secretariat would like some steer on how to deal with these issues. There is a question of whether ALNAP should grow organically, but the idea is to be prepared for when the current cap of 100 Members is reached.

PKC added that having a big membership would make a different organisation from having a small Membership, and that this could be an issue at some point in the future. There could be risks as well as positives from more Members joining.

MB wondered if the current cap of 100 could be reached organically, but further growth more targeted, determining the size of the current Membership, perhaps by constituency, and deciding where in the Membership future growth should be.

SG echoed these thoughts and the idea that Membership should be means to an end.

AR asked if new Members would really need to prove that they are making a real contribution, and if they do, how this is measured or assessed ? KS also wondered how this is assessed ? JM referred back to the Membership criteria suggested that there weren't very robust checks but that it was hard to see what more could be done. Practical suggestion would be welcome. NB echoed this.

PKC suggested that the Membership does matter for Members: tends to make them more engaged and active in sharing lessons, etc.

FB said engagement would be similar, regardless of Membership, but agrees that Membership is an incentive.

FB had to leave the call, and was replaced by Helene Juillard (HJ).

KS thought it wouldn't be the same without Membership and said that the Membership itself makes it more motivating. KS also thought that intimacy and trust comes with Membership and knowing the Membership, and this is something that could change with further growth.

NB summarised the discussion that ALNAP is a significant public good, which will continue to grow; the question remains where and how much this should happen, and further questions to consider are where future impact should lie. ALNAP could continue to grow organically until it reaches its current cap of 100 Members, but in the meantime ask questions of where future growth should be, which constituency should be more represented and what impact it wants to achieve.

KS agreed, but suggested that there is a need to decide now on what happens after the cap has been reached. NB echoed this and JM also agreed.

PKC wondered if we might be faced with a legacy problem, once the 100 cap has been reached? Members brought in before the cap might have a less good claim to membership than later applicants.

MB suggested one way forward could be to target key strategic networks, and to proactively approach these.

JM added that the Secretariat would welcome further suggestions on how to deal with these challenges.

ACTION: ALNAP Secretariat will take on these views and suggestions and come back with options for future Membership. Specifically, whether we should restrict further growth to under-represented constituencies or what a future cap could look like.

NB suggested to now review current applications (agenda item 8). JM thought it may be better to wait with those until a way forward has been decided, in light of current discussions. Applicants have been notified of a decision being taken at a later stage.

Agenda Item 5 – Structured Review updates

PKC gave an overview of progress on this item since the last SC meeting. John Cosgrove was asked to look at guidance produced by ODI on the use of the systematic review method. ODI's work in this area has looked at how this method could be adapted from its strict use (which comes from the field of the physical sciences, in particular medicine) to help researchers in development and humanitarian aid to know that they

have: a) looked at all available evidence in a piece of research and b) make sure that the evidence that is considered has a higher quality. The problems, as John's work have highlighted, are 1) What counts as evidence in the standard SR methodology tends to be quantitative and RCT-focused; 2) greater weight given to peer reviewed and academic work. So doing systematic review in the humanitarian sector is very limiting since so much of that literature is 'grey.' John Cosgrove has produced a pros and cons document exploring what a modified approach could yield. Not sure yet on whether we are in agreement that it is useful, since you end up excluding surprising conclusions and end up with self-fulfilling conclusions.

Action Point: The ALNAP Secretariat will produce a summary of this work for the next Steering Committee meeting to help members have something to say to those who are asking for systematic review (i.e. donors).

Agenda Item 6 – Work plan updates

NB recommended to organise the updates alongside work streams.

JM explained that most things are on track since the last SC Meeting.

SG wanted to find out, how much activity there has been on the Syria Portal, and how the synthesis work going forward will work out?

PKC responded to say more resources are being added, but that there aren't as many new resources as expected. PKC also added that visitor numbers on the portal are fairly healthy.

JM explained that more concrete thinking about the Syria synthesis will come in January, during the development of the annual work plan. It would be good to liaise with CALL Members at this point in order to decide what kind of document would be the most appropriate.

NB and SG both suggested that there will be more resources available soon. AR added that Germany is currently not carrying out evaluations, but only monitoring.

PKC explained that more work on Syria would require significant input from the Secretariat. Currently this capacity is not in place. Luz will be taking this work forward and the decision would be for the rest of the financial year to decide on how the little time available would be used best.

SG mentioned these were useful updates and he will follow up bilaterally about the synthesis.

NB thanked the Secretariat for a very full and relevant work plan.

Agenda Item 7 – Election updates

FS explained that Bertrand Taithe of the Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute at Manchester University has won the elections for the Research and Academic constituency.

FS will share a short biography with the Steering Committee.

Agenda Item 8 – Member Applications

See discussion under Agenda Item 4.

Agenda Item 9 - 30th ALNAP Meeting Concept Note

PKC introduced the concept note to the SC and explained that the idea was to identify various types of collaboration; the focus of the meeting was not to come up with a single statement or a recommendation, rather the meeting was about learning.

PKC further explained that the meeting format will be similar to previous ones, although the Secretariat is looking for facilitation of the workshops/sessions and perhaps reduce the number of parallel sessions.

The meeting will be kindly hosted in Berlin by MFA Germany.

HJ asked if there were any key themes to include, such as coordination or programming/innovation and new ways of delivering aid? NB suggested to put this question in writing and to send it directly to PKC/the Secretariat.

KS was concerned that the concept note was too broad. NB added that ICVA's annual meeting covered partnerships and that ALNAP wants to cover the complexity of partnerships, though also agrees that this could mean too broad a focus.

AR asked if the partnerships with developmental side would also have space in these discussions/on the meeting agenda ?

PKC explained that the lack of precision around the scope of the paper mirrors the same lack of precision in the humanitarian system when it comes to partnerships. PKC also agreed that the focus could be too broad and wondered if narrowing it down could happen by a focus on field-level/operational side, and what improves humanitarian action on the ground ?

JM echoed PKC's thoughts and added that ALNAP's strong position would be to help provide a 'taxonomy' of the concept.

NB agreed that ALNAP has an ability to bring large groups and a broad focus and to narrow it down to a common understanding, and that this would be a good thing to do.

PKC explained further that the idea was to directly approach certain groups and to ask those to contribute to the parallel sessions, but also to leave it open for others to contribute, to have a mixture of targeted panels and others.

SG wondered if some of the sessions could again be linked to evaluation ? PKC agreed that this would be good.

Agenda Item 10 Location and date of next SC meeting

NB suggested that the meeting will be in January (as December is too busy), but highlighted implications of the annual meeting, as the Meeting Paper will have to be ready before then.

The meeting will be a phone conference; FS will set up a doodle poll, and the meeting will be either the w/c 12th January 2015 or 19th January 2015.

Action Point: Doodle poll for exact date

Agenda Item 12 AOB

KS asked about the Montreux donors retreat and JM and KS will follow up bilaterally.